

## **Tuning Her Success in Countries Far Away**

**EVA JAISLI** As the CEO and co-owner of the tool exporting company PB Swiss Tools, she appears wherever a prestigious entrepreneur is in demand. If it is of use to her company - the world's only tools producing company that still carries out every single production step in its country of origin.

ALICE BAUMANN (TEXT)

FRANCOIS GRIBI (PHOTOS)

The Hohgant and Schratzenflue mountains, are they high or low? The Emmental Valley, is it wide or rather narrow? It all depends on your point of view. To Eva Jaisli, entrepreneur with production facilities in Wasen and in Sumiswald, all paths from the Napf mountain reach out to the wide world. She does not see any limits. "I take advantage of all the chances I'm offered. In favour of the company, not of me."

She keeps asking questions like: "Did I do this well? How can I improve myself?" She also keeps tabs on people around. Eva Jaisli likes contacts abroad, considering them to be exciting. The Japanese markets interests her the most as concerns the personal profit in inter-cultural competence she gains out of it. "Our Japanese partners give me so much information on conceptual and strategic work. They question each and any process and production stage. Furthermore, our partners know the world market better than we do. Meeting them is, therefore, an immense opportunity to learn."

In her contact with Japan, she realized the potential of her company: "We must learn to understand what customers want from us. We do not produce tools, we offer solutions." The existence of PB Swiss Tools was guaranteed as long as "we can solve our partners' problems."

**Here, by the Napf mountain, "Swissness" is not merely small talk. It's happening right by the company's doorstep.**

There it comes again, the word "partner". Not "customer". Eva Jaisli typically speaks about relationship and culture when mentioning foreign guests visiting the company. She as well as her husband Max Baumann like to combine a guided visit to their company with a horse and carriage trip to the Emmentaler model cheese dairy, a bicycle outing by the Emme river to Ramsei or an evening at the theatre on Moosegg. "Enriched with such events lived, our partners automatically link post-card Switzerland to our high-quality tools".

Indeed, here, some 60 miles from Berne, "Swissness" is not merely small talk. It's happening right by the company's doorstep: the fine cows on the gorgeous pastures are milked by the same hands in the morning, before the fog lifts, that operate the machinery later on that work the steel for the screwdrivers with the legendary red grip. The punching machines pulsate not far from milking machines. 40% of the PB personnel are also working on their own farms.

### **Every Year a New Products**

Hardly another country has higher production costs than Switzerland: How does the entrepreneur trim down her costs? "We have competitive prices", Eva Jaisli purports

on a visit to the production facilities. “We are not better in every way, but we have clear strengths. An example is our innovation force: we invent a new product every year.” She says it and points to one of the machines her in-house engineers had built.

Furthermore, they were the world’s only tool-making company realizing every production step in the country of origin: “We develop, produce and package our products ourselves.”

“Our clear USP is, of course, our tool quality”, Ms Jaisli calls out in the racket made by the machinery and mentions the quality warranty unlimited in time. And her competitors? They were happy to have strong competitors, “because this spurs us on tremendously”. Most competitors had a more restricted product range or a lower quality level.

Two thirds of the yearly output of 8 million PB-Swiss-Tools products go abroad. How does this Emmental company succeed in exporting their niche products to 35 countries in the EU and Asia and opening up new markets continuously? “Our marketing budgets are too modest and our know-how too low to go it alone. With our partners, we open up new markets. At present, we are discussing the setting in place of new distribution channels in Eastern Europe, Russia and China. In doing so, we are profiting from our good relations to Siemens and Toyota. We are proud to extending our scope so rapidly.”

Proud. That’s a word Eva Jaisli uses only when it comes to her company. She’d never use it on herself. She is too factual and too target-oriented for this. Her emotions go to PB Swiss Tools - a company that was called PB Baumann up to last year - and so does her sense for precision: every now and then, she can be seen taking a gauge in the workshop to check on a tool’s measures.

There is hardly a subject matter the entrepreneur and mother is not interviewed about. At the present time, Eva Jaisli is *the* model small-company entrepreneur *per se*. But she swipes aside this massed public presence: “This is merely a coincidence and will stop as it began”, she is convinced. However, she was cunning enough to use this free-of-charge presence in a profitable way: “It serves proper communication of our new name, PB Swiss Tools. After all, our existence depends on people knowing us.”

**“I can get stuck on something. If so, I have to do a round of jogging to find the solution.”**

How come that the former teacher has such a marked talent for communication and advertising? The roots of her capacities lie with her parents’ wood business. Her mother was in charge of personnel and finances of an Oberaargau wood-selling business and her father had developed a new method for panelling walls: the cut-to-measure wooden plates were put together in such a way that the told the tree’s story on the one hand and gave an overall picture on the other hand.

Eva Jaisli has made this pattern her own: joining the individual parts to make a whole and keeping the final result in mind while accompanying all process stages. Often, she says: “I see the solution”. Solving complex tasks was her strength, she says. “I

can get stuck on something. If so, I have to do a round of jogging or bicycling or have a good night's sleep to find the solution."

### **Going to Overtime Work Limits**

Her team is of great help to her. Thanks to Eva Jaisli's zeal and her ability to motivate the company operating committee, the 150 employees of PB Swiss Tools often work more than average. Since the beginning of 2007, for example, they have been working six days a week, in shifts. "We are going to the limits of overtime work", Jaisli concedes, but also emphasizes that her employees profit from the yearly work time during the months of sowing, haying and harvesting. "We are quite aware of our interdependence."

This interdependence is not reflected by closeness, but rather by distance: Although she has been "on board" for ten years, she doesn't call anybody by his first name. She insists on strict manners and clear structures. Both promote innovation, she is convinced.

Eva Jaisli must always go to the limit, because she and her husband Max Baumann got deep into debt when taking over the company, that is now managed by the fourth generation, eight years ago. There are further challenges to be met: "We are always installing new machinery as we intend to automate even more processes. But I have fun in my work and in my family and just do things. It is my duty, I can't do anything else. I do not feel privileged." What is the highpoint of her life? "Trekking through Ladakh as a young woman." Says it and looks out of the window, to the broad valley of Emmental, lost in thought.

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Caption: "We must learn to understand what customers want from us. We do not produce tools, we offer solutions."

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## **PERSONAL DETAILS**

### **Details**

Name: Eva Jaisli

Function: CEO of PB Swiss Tools

Age: 48

Place of residence: Burgdorf

Family: lives with her husband, Max Baumann, and four children from two marriages

### **Career**

1985—1988 Head of project with the City of Berne Economic Authority

1989—1992 Deputy Head of Department with HEKS

1992—1997 Lecturer / Member of the management committee of the Bernese Technical Colleges of Higher Education

Since 1997, PB Swiss Tools

### **Management Principle**

1. Create the conditions for top-notch performance and success.
2. Respond to customer and market requirements with innovative solutions.

3. Consistent and tenacious target orientation.

### **The Company**

**PB Swiss Tools** The former PB Baumann company has been the hallmark for Swiss precision since 1878 and manufactures 8 million tools from high-quality steel for clients in 35 countries every year. 150 persons generate a turnover of more than 25m CHF. The company owners are Eva Jaisli and Max Baumann.

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